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LETTER TO THE REV. JOHN DORLAND.

Reverend Sir,

I trust you will pardon the presumption of a layman of little note, who is about to take the very unusual liberty of offering a few remarks upon the utterances of a Minister of your exalted rank. You have doubtless observed, for you are a man of observation, that in this age, and in these Western Countries especially, there is a growing disposition on the part of the laity to examine for themselves into matters which in "the good old times" were regarded as exclusively appertaining to the Priestly Office; and if I mistake not, you yourself have done something, or which is nearly the same, have *tried* to do something, to encourage the adherents of "Mother Church"—the one you love to designate as "the mother of abominations,"—to think for themselves, and to inquire for themselves into the doctrines and government of that hierarchy. Indeed it has been my privilege to hear you descend, with characteristic eloquence, upon the errors and abuses of the Church of Rome; and I have also had the opportunity, not to say the advantage, of reading your letters, addressed to Roman Catholics, as well as your little book written for the particular benefit of a certain class of religionists in the Eastern Townships of Lower Canada. In these efforts you recognized the principle, the *great* principle of the Protestant Reformation—the right of private judgment—and with muchunction insisted upon the necessity of its exercise. I advert to these facts as furnishing some grounds of excuse for my present action, for I feel I ought not to rush into print, in the presence of a person of your pretensions, without some show of reason; but having interposed your own imposing, and in this respect very sound opinions, between myself and the blame which persons of easily alarmed consciences might be ready to visit upon my head, I shall proceed to offer some remarks upon your recently issued Dialogue between two Methodists, on the subject of Class Meetings.

It is quite possible that you may not relish what I will say, but as my object is not to please you but to state my own views, which I also believe to be the views of many respectable and pious members of the Methodist Societies and Congregations, here and elsewhere, I shall not be much disturbed by the contingency of your disapprobation. The increased Sale of your Pamphlet which may be consequent upon this letter will perhaps enable you the more readily to forgive me.

Asserting my own personal right to do the thinking for myself upon all important subjects, after having carefully weighed the evidences *pro* and *con*, I am bound to accept your deliverances as the true and sincere expositions of your own thoughts, and I do not therefore quarrel with you at all for thinking as you do, or even for endeavouring by all legitimate means to recommend your views to others, but I do regret that you should be so ill able to exercise the privilege in a way creditable to yourself, or to the influential section of the Christian Church in Canada, of which you are so prominent a Minister.

Having with some circumlocution managed to come to this point, you will please understand, that I mean to say *you do not write English well enough to appear in print*; and, as it degrades the Wesleyan Ministry in the eyes of a discerning public if one of its chief members becomes guilty of the grossest offences against the vernacular, and as it also adds weight to the lying but often repeated allegation that they are a parcel of ignorant and uneducated men, only fit to mislead the rabble, I deem it right to prove, that you, by your writings, can only do harm, and if I succeed in doing this, I suppose the inference that you ought not to print will follow naturally enough. After I have proved this I will present, as much as I may, not to you so much as to my fellow worshippers in your sanctuaries, some reasons why the rule which makes meeting in C condition of membership should be so relaxed or modified as to meet the demand which has been made, and will continue to be, as it is granted.

I might take exception to several phrases in the short preface to your Dialogues, the construction of which betrays either great carelessness or great ignorance, but a quotation will suffice, and here it is, "This I the more readily do, as my views where we both agree in opposition to Dr. Ryerson have run in a somewhat different channel from his, and that I can *supply* them without any fear of travelling over the same line of argument." The antecedent in this sentence is apparently Dr. Ryerson, although I suspect you mean Mr. Wilkinson, but whose is the line of argument intended? Is it your own? Is it Dr. Ryerson's? Or is it Mr. Wilkinson's? Allow me also to remark, that to "*supply* views" is an abuse of words: to state or to enunciate views is the proper term. At page 6, you have this very elegant passage, "Are you aware that Mr. Wesley has delivered his judgment most explicitly upon this very subject? As doubtless you are not, *else* you would not have made the statements, &c." At page 7, you say, "that that separate organization was forced upon his (Mr. Wesley's) Society, by circumstances which he could not control, is well known, as it was clearly apprehended, and to some extent provided for, by himself." Now if you had purposely tried to make an absurd sentence I doubt whether you could have succeeded so well. First we are told "Mr. Wesley did not design his Societies should ever assume a separate Church organization," but that it, "the organization," was forced upon his Society by "circumstances he could not control!" Was he there to exercise the control? No he was in Heaven. Clearly then he could neither control nor attempt to control; but if you mean to say that he could not have controlled these circumstances if he had been with his Society, you put your judgment above his, for you have admitted he at least did not design *ever* to organize, &c. Then your unfortunate jumble goes on, "but that that separate organization was forced upon his Society, by circumstances which he could not control, is well known, as it was clearly apprehended, and to some extent provided for, by Mr. Wesley himself." Now please tell us, was it the organization that was clearly apprehended and provided for, or was it "the circumstances which he could not control." To my mind you seem to be trying to say that he apprehended or anticipated the occurrence of certain uncontrollable circumstances which would necessitate a re-organization, and that to some extent he provided for such a contingency. If he foresaw the condition which would compel a Church organization, and made provision to meet the exigency, how can you reconcile such a fact with the preliminary assertion that he *never* designed an organization? Perhaps you will or would answer, that he did not at first entertain such a design, but that the "coming events which cast their shadows before" them, compelled him, late in life, to change his plans. One thing is clear, and it is, that you have involved yourself in a mass of contradictions, and grammatical blunders, from which all your skill cannot extricate you. I shall not stop at your intended though not clearly expressed conclusion which, for the sake of my readers, I state in intelligible language, "that Mr. Wesley foresaw the necessity of, and provided for a Church organization," but in answer to this I will say that many Methodistically well read persons are of a different opinion.

The inaccuracies in the same paragraph, (page 7,) are not however, confined to the few I have noted. You go on thus, "Yet you find no evidence, not the slightest, that he wished the condition of membership to be made less stringent; but the contrary rather. The burden of proving the letter rests with you my friend." Now I put it to you whether "*the letter*" here spoken of may not honestly be taken to mean

the supposed wish of Mr. Wesley, to render the condition of membership more stringent? I take upon myself to affirm, that this meaning is the only one which your words will warrant, and you are therefore found calling upon the soft-headed gentleman whom you have set up as your opponent, to sustain a proposition entirely distinct from, and antagonistic to the one you intended to submit. But granting that you meant to throw upon him the onus of proving that Mr. Wesley "wished the condition of membership to be made less stringent," and that he failed to do so, I contend that that would be no justification for your retaining a rule which, however applicable to the Societies in the days of Mr. Wesley, and under his government, is now very far from being necessary. But as I had not intended to discuss this question upon its merits, until I had enumerated a few of your most glaring philological and grammatical errors, I will waive it for the moment, and pursue my course. After the phrases I have dissected, you add, "but the contrary rather," by which you mean that Mr. Wesley was disposed to make the condition of membership more stringent than it already was, an assertion which, let me tell you in all sincerity, is sheer nonsense. The condition was *regular attendance at Class Meetings*, a condition admitting of no gradation of rigor. Such attendance allows of no degrees of comparison, and there can be nothing added by way of increase.

At page 8, you say, "I confess every step you take in this subject, increases my surprise, in the fullest measure of which I ask you, &c." The first member of this sentence, exhibits an exceedingly awkward arrangement, for people do not take steps in subjects; the second part is a piece of swelling bombast. The same paragraph furnishes a further specimen of bad composition, thus, "and when the Apostle, say the Holy Spirit by the Apostle, assures us that without holiness we cannot see God, *he was much mistaken*," &c., the first verb being in the present and the last in the past tense. On the same page you go on, "the Apostle *may be supposed* to point to assemblies of the Primitive Church, *exactly similar* to our Class Meetings." Now my dear Sir, do you not see that you assume as a fact that such meetings had been previously established, and were held, and that the shadow of doubt which the sentence carries, does not rest upon the existence of such Institutions, but on the directness of the Apostolic allusion? Did you mean to affirm that meetings exactly similar to the Methodist Class Meetings, were then held? I think not, and yet your false composition justifies the inference that you did. The whole of the paragraph animadverted upon, is confused jargon.

I proceed to your 10th page, and at the very beginning of the first paragraph, you tell us that "Class Meetings have a strong and *irresistible* claim on the high and prominent position we give them." Of course you mean they have a claim to that position, for if they only have a claim on it many other things may claim on it too. Your readers in going through this paragraph, are naturally led to expect an account of the "remarkably providential way in which Class Meetings originated," and accordingly, they are told, "they were found to be *eminently serviceable in detecting abuses*," &c. Is this to be taken as a relation of the Providential occurrence? You befoe us, my dear Sir. The second paragraph on page 10, tells us, "I make the assertion with nothing of a *spirit of undue reflection*." Whoever heard of a spirit of reflection, due or undue before? Then we have "spirituality fearfully below par," a fine theological figure of speech; and next we are informed, that there are persons who "do not wish to be *dogged into subjects* for which they have little or no relish." What idea these words are intended to convey, may possibly be known to you, but I verily believe it is known to you alone. Page 11, is taken in part with the reply you put in the mouth of Algernon; yet in the short paragraph which owes its paternity to your pen, there are several very clumsy lines; but I pass on. The next passage informs us that "no serious and intelligent Christian can object to meet with his fellow Christians, *to converse and pray together*." So a man may converse and pray together. Good! Probably you meant that he could not object to meet for converse and prayer *with* his fellow Christians. Next we have the *allusions* of Malachi, and the "references to them by Jehovah himself," of which pluralities you say "I will read *it* for your consideration." There are other errors in the passage which I cannot stop to notice, for I find my task more lengthy than I expected. Page 13, "latitude claimed and acted upon," bosh. The paragraph following has the words "as to" in the first line, in excess of its requirements, and the whole of the first member of that sentence is out of joint. To make sense after the "or indeed," several words are wanted. Next paragraph. You tell us also that there are other *views* which tend to strengthen your convictions,—reasons you should have said,—and one of these views is the opportunity thus afforded to the Minister of the Church for knowing the spiritual state of the Members &c., so a view is an opportunity. Good again. In the same passage, the word *this* is used once too often, and once for "through it." I cannot refrain from quoting the concluding part as a fair sample of worly disorder. "But 'if no such means exist, or may or may not be attended as the members shall please, an important end of ministerial obligation may be defeated; *and which*, according to your scheme, may be done with impunity.' There's a sample of English fit to be held up to the world in proof of the erudition of the Wesleyan Ministry. At the bottom of the page a new paragraph begins this way. "Another is," another what? To be accommodating, I go back to the commencement of the preceding passage, and find "there are other views." So it may be presumed this "another" is one of them. Let us see what that view is. It is "a church exists for mutual edification." The same awkwardness again. "But let us remove the necessity for attending them, and soon they *would* become neglected, &c." Change of tense again, "and they *will* soon," is the proper reading. Page 15, "This last is a large *count* with several grave particulars." *Indictment* is the word, *count* is a particular charge. The paragraph which follows is almost as badly constructed as another in the book, but I make only one excerpt from it: "institution to be judged of, not *because* (by is the word) but in its adaptation (*because* of) to promote (promote is not wanted) the ends for which the Church was instituted," &c. Page 16, "none should be expelled" no members you mean. Again, "But would you say that *such* are the only instances in which *such* a disciplinary process should be applied," put *these* where the first *such* is. Same phrase, the word *charged* is used instead of *censured* or *condemned*, either of which would have been better, and a little below the plural and personal pronoun, "they" is employed towards the Church, then the neutral "its." The whole of this passage is a disgraceful compound of words misused and of grammatical rules set at defiance: one would hardly pardon a hod-man for committing such blunders. Take its conclusion; "will vanish as mist from the influence of the rising sun," here clearly the mist is from the rising sun! why did you do not say "before the rising sun." Again, "increasing the size of a Church;" *size* may apply to the material fabric in which a Church meets but not to the membership. "Results which have *flown*," is bad composition, you should have said "by the results of a century." Again, "The condition *against* which you *except* in us," It is not usual to expect *against* conditions, you may except or take exception to them. Page 18, you say that "an hospital exists for the treatment of sick people with the *professed* object of restoring them to health and sending them out into the world fit for its duties." I suppose you mean fit for their duties to the world or in the world, but as the phrase stands they are sent into the world fit for the duties of the hospital; and let me further tell you that, "exist for the treatment of sick people with the 'professed object,' is a wretched concatenation, for according to it, it is the sick people who have the 'professed object, &c.'" Again, "an hospital exists not to merely swell, &c., gratify, &c., but by treating the sick, &c.," so it exists by treating the sick, &c. Again, "Our course has been most successful, *while*," say *but* and then try if the rest will not read better than it does now. Page 19, "Your reference, &c., is rendered more particularly attractive by your *fling* (slang) at others;" Other what? Other references? This paragraph, like some others, I have despatched with few words of comment, is a beautiful proof of the "confusion worse confounded," into which a self-sufficient but incompetent writer may throw our language. Let my readers turn to the Dialogue in question, and at the page noted above (19) commencing with "Could we be assured," and if they are not rewarded with a sample of Babel I shall be mistaken. The last or 20th page is a little better, but not much. In it I find, "Our Church has guards sufficiently numerous and well appointed to protect its members from such tyranny"!!! This is a very warlike and pompous peroration; but who are these guards so well armed and accoutred? O! the learned gentleman was only speaking of checks or rules and the grand military figure he conjured up must be put to the account of his self-glorification at having brought his first Dialogue to so triumphant a conclusion.

I have run as rapidly as I could over your first Dialogue, noting as I passed the more glaring offences against Lindley Murray and Doctor Watts, but I do not plume myself upon having discovered all your mistakes or exposed every slipshod expression. Doubtless keener eyes than mine will fasten upon the pages, and you may set it down before hand that many a jeer will greet them. If you alone were compromised by the foolish writings you have such an itching to obtrude upon society one would hardly regret the results, but when, as I have before said, you are the instrument of bringing the false reproach of vulgarity and ignorance upon a large number of intelligent, useful, and retiring men, it is right that some one in their name should protest against the injustice. If it should be answered that they can do this when needed without the intervention of a *laic*, I reply that the people bear the reproach as well as the Ministers and that if the Ministers are long-suffering, it is no reason why the whole Wesleyan interest should be brought into contempt.

I have not seen the Review of Doctor Ryerson by the Rev. H. Wilkinson, but from your eulogistic notice of it I apprehend he has performed his task as well as the subject permitted, in which case he cannot but feel insulted at the supplementary rubbish you have ventured to bring into the arena.

Some of your peculiarities of style have been adverted to, but I must not omit noticing the abortive attempts at sarcasm in which you indulge. If it were in your power to be severely sarcastic a proper regard for your professional character should prevent the exercise of so un-ministerial a faculty. Please take the hint and if you should ever write again for the press—a contingency which I devoutly hope will never become fact—be so good as to profit by it.

In your little book there is also a good deal of what is now popularly called clap-trap, or the *argumentum ad vulgum hominum*, and in proof I quote, as follows, "Nor can I well suppress the laugh at your talking, &c." "My dear friend, if you talk at this rate, you may depend upon it, the religious world will feel convinced that they have given you credit for a larger acquaintance with the simplest elements of Christianity than you seem to possess." "As to your proposition and its application to the question under consideration, I must say that it evinces the same crudeness of thought and hastiness of conclusion." There is much more of that kind of thing, and I am aware that with persons more ignorant than yourself it may pass current for good coin, but intelligent men will easily detect the base metal.

Finally; your insufferable egotism should not be suffered to go "unwhipped of justice," but I have neither time nor space to expend in rebuke of such an absurdity.

With regard to the Methodist rule which makes meeting in class the condition of membership, I shall not trespass long upon your patience. I believe, and I think most persons at all conversant with the history of early Methodism believe with me that in instituting the class meeting, Mr. Wesley did the very best thing that could be done. This institution was a necessity of the times. The gross ignorance which prevailed in respect of experimental religion, not only among the poor to whom it was then chiefly expounded, but also among the educated classes, rendered it imperative that opportunities for instruction should be afforded. The religion of the heart was then an almost obsolete idea, for a miserable formalism had invaded the Established Church, and a cold philosophical rationalism had been substituted for piety in many of those which dissented from the Thirty-nine Articles. A more affecting picture of spiritual impoverishment was hardly ever presented by Great Britain, and I need only refer you to the graphic portraiture of it by the author of the Centenary of Methodism in proof of the truth of what I allege. In addition then to what you claim for class meetings I recognize the not less important object of instruction, as one of their original, distinctive, and essential features. "Feed my people with knowledge" is the Divine behest. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." "For this end was I born, and to this end came I into the world, that I might bear witness to the truth," echoes the Divine Saviour. At the epoch of Our Lord's advent, the world universal presented even a darker spiritual aspect than England at the time when Wesley went forth with the lamp of truth, so "He taught the people as one having authority." Luther and his co-adjutors imitated their Great Master, and Wesley did the same. "The times of ignorance which God winked at" were to pass away, and knowledge, the food of the soul, was to be imparted. I am not about to contend that class meetings or meetings somewhat analogous are wholly unsuited to this purpose now-a-days, for doubtless many persons awakened under the effective Ministry of Methodism and other evangelisms, require instruction, and I am quite satisfied that Dr. Ryerson, whose writings on this subject I do not however possess, has not the slightest objection to attendance upon them for this purpose or for any other good purpose. You say truly in your Dialogue that other Christian Churches have not the condition of membership you insist upon, namely, meeting in class, and I have yet confidence enough in your catholicity to believe you regard the communicants of such Churches as "branches in the living vine." Now as no evangelical Church, the Wesleyan excepted, makes meeting in class, or in assemblies analogous to class, the condition of membership, it follows that the great bulk of the Christian world enjoys the privilege of church communion, and gives illustration to the christian character without the coercion you are determined to exercise towards your flocks. In one or two or more places, you have stated that Methodism had no reason to fear a comparison with other religious denominations. The boast was invidious, and therefore unnecessary. The Methodist Church is a good Church, but if it were offensively to challenge, as you have almost done, comparison with other Churches, in the piety, zeal, intelligence, and practical godliness of its Members, it would possibly discover that such a proceeding was viewed as mere absurd arrogance. You fraternize with the Ministers of these Churches, and treat their people with all confidence by inviting them to the Lord's table; you rejoice in the prosperity with which the Great Head vouchsafes to reward their efforts; in a word, you admit the work of grace to be as genuine among the Presbyterians, Independents, Baptists, &c., as that which progresses in the hearts of your own followers, and doing all this you give a direct denegation to the very arguments upon which the "condition of membership" is based. Do you not by admitting that piety may be, and is, found in all these churches, consent to the fact that it may commence, increase, and mature, without Class Meetings? And do you not see that if it can originate and grow in these churches without attendance upon class, it may also grow without a similar condition, in the Wesleyan societies? To my mind, and to the minds of thousands favored with Methodist ministrations, the answer is conclusive. I have no wish to abolish class meetings, on the contrary, it would grieve me much if they were discontinued, but I desire to see abolished the condition which attaches to their non-attendance. When the privilege of meeting in class is not valued for its own sake, the stringent rule will be disregarded, and let me in the most formal manner repeat what your friend Algernon alleges, viz.:—that it is habitually ignored by a large proportion of the membership. At page 17 of your pamphlet, you tell us, "I lay down as a principle with the utmost confidence, (here is another instance of false composition, for according to the phrase, it is the principle that has the utmost confidence, and not you,) that a christian truly in earnest for eternal life, will gladly avail himself or herself of such a means as class meetings." Well then, if your pious church members are sure to attend so gladly, where is the necessity for compulsion? Again, "they are prized by the great bulk of the best and most spiritual of our membership," from which it follows, of course, that those will attend, at all events, whether or not there is a rule to compel them. What then is the object of the rigorous law? Surely it seems to be nothing more nor less than to retain the unspiritual. I think the inference perfectly logical. But allow me to show you how you contradict yourself. I have just now quoted your words to prove that the pious will voluntarily, *gladly* attend, whether or not a rule exists, but turning to page 14 you prelect thus, "but let us remove the necessity for attending them, (class meetings,) as you think we ought, and soon they would

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become neglected! So then, after all, the people who *gladly* attend them, and who prize them so highly, are only waiting the chance of turning their backs upon them!!! Try it again Reverend Sir, and see if you can write one page without committing half-a-dozen blunders, and involving yourself in several ridiculous contradictions.

I have almost done with you for the present. If I have leisure enough, I may possibly amuse myself with your other Dialogue, meanwhile you can digest what I now offer you. Before I close, permit me to state a few reasons which I think operate to prevent attendance upon class meeting.

First.—I have known, and *now know* persons, who without objecting to the institution, would almost as soon meet a bear deprived of her cubs, as meet in class. Their nervous organization cannot bear the ordeal, and with the most sincere desire to avail of every helpful means of grace, they cannot profit by this.

Second.—Some persons are always offended (hurt) at the unlikely stories which individuals of extremely inconsistent lives are unhappily in the habit of telling at class; this has been the source of trouble and disquietude to many precious souls, if not also the cause of much skepticism and infidelity. A person of notoriously violent temper, or of doubtful veracity, or of questionable integrity in his dealings with his fellow-creatures, or of habitual insobriety—not perhaps amounting to drunkenness but half way to it—stands up and speaks of his spiritual condition as altogether encouraging; he throws in probably a few common places about temptations and trials, and concludes by thanking God for good desires, or with the stereotyped statement that he enjoys peace. This is the nomenclature of the class room, and without intending to detract from the genuine emotional piety of the truly sincere persons who use it, I affirm that in a lamentably large number of cases it is mere vague formalism. But the sticklers for naked truth stumble; they cannot understand how Mr. Twist or Mrs. Stormaway can enjoy peace, and from doubting in these cases they graduate to general skepticism—they are in the scriptural sense of the word offended, and they leave the class.

Third.—There are persons so constituted that they are averse to speak before others of their spiritual exercises, and yet many such feel as much, perhaps more, than those who are more talkative. You might get such individuals to speak privately to a Minister but in a class room never. Then there are some too who look upon the class as a sort of Confessional and you cannot disabuse them. Indeed the exercise sometimes assumes that appearance for the members are not always the most judicious persons in the world and many a Leader has had to interrupt narratives which were becoming rather minute.

Objections like these, and many others that might be enumerated, are entertained to meeting in class, and yet the objectors may all be persons of piety or well disposed to seek religion. If class meeting were regarded like any other means of grace, and the duty of attendance enforced by the grave considerations which may safely be used in its favour, it would retain its value irrespective of the rule. Seasons of social prayer, hearing God's word preached, the Lord's Supper and other similar privileges are not guarded by coercive enactments, but are they therefore more neglected than class meetings? I reply with an emphatic NO, and all your special pleading to the contrary notwithstanding, I hold with an increasing many, that the rule which demands unconditional submission, is tyrannical and therefore unchristian.

In conclusion, you and I and everybody in the Methodist Church know, that this *stringent* law is *habitually slighted*, and that the discipline is not enforced. You know that thousands of nominal members are kept on the books who are seldom if ever found in attendance upon class, and more, you know that there is very little disposition on the part of the Ministers generally to expel such delinquents, but that any trifling excuse is taken in explanation, if explanation is demanded. The rule in effect is, as it ought to be, A NULLITY.

I am, Reverend Sir,

Yours truly,

SCRUTATOR.

P.S.—This letter should be read with the Pamphlet at hand for reference.

The writer does not at all pretend to be a scholar, and he is well persuaded that a good grammarian may find much to criticize in his own performance; yet, appreciating the importance of educational competency in a Wesleyan Minister who undertakes to write for the public, his jealousy for the honor of the church has prompted him to enter his protest against the literary labors of the Reverend Mr. Borland. Previous to the publication of the letter a proof copy was furnished to that gentleman, and he was invited to point out any misrepresentations it might contain, but he did not reply.